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## *Saluting Employees*

# **TDCJ honors victims, advocates during Crime Victims' Rights Week**

In April, crime victims, victim advocates and criminal justice professionals across the state commemorated the 31st Annual National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This year's theme of "Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims." highlights how communities can support crime victims during their recovery. National Crime Victims' Rights Week began in 1984 when President Reagan signed the Victims of Crime Act into law, which established a source for victims' compensation funding through criminal fines, penalties and forfeitures.

Representatives from TDCJ's Victim Services Division attended many of the week's events, including the "Every Victim, Every Time" conference held in Bryan, which provided prosecutors, law enforcement, medical and mental health caregivers, as well as other criminal justice professionals an opportunity to learn more about how the justice system works in support of crime victims. Topics

included family violence, protective orders, child abuse victimization, crime victim compensation, addiction recovery, the Prison Rape Elimination Act and victim advocacy. TDCJ Victim Services Manager Brooke Ellison conducted a workshop describing how the agency helps prepare victim witnesses for an execution, and division employees par-



**VSD Director Angie McCown participates in a Crime Victims' Rights and Mass Casualty/Terrorism Events panel discussion, exploring the unique effects of such events on victims and their families.**

ticipated in events organized by the Nueces County Crime Victim's Rights Coalition, including an Ask the Expert segment on local television which shared information about victims' rights and services, and an awards ceremony held to recognize those in the community who work to help crime victims.

Victim Services Division Director Angie McCown explained why TDCJ supports this annual event, saying, "There has always been a significant focus on the rights of the defendant in the criminal justice system, often leaving the victim feeling lost and left out of the process. National Crime Victims' Rights Week is an opportunity to listen to the voices of victims and those who serve them so that future generations might realize the importance of services for crime victims, and the importance of treating those victimized by crime with dignity and respect." ●